New Haven's Watergate

Alan Kay

Model police chief James Ahern (center) at an anti-war demonstration in 1970, allegedly masterminded the wiretap operation.

by Cynthia Brown

Democratic Mayor Richard C. Lee presided over the "greening" of New Haven. In the course of his eight terms, 1954 to 1969, New Haven became a model Model City. Federal urban renewal funds were poured into New Haven at the highest per capita rate of any city in the country.

Working closely with Yale University, Lee brought world-famed architects like Paul Rudolph, Philip Johnson, and I. M. Pei to design office towers, a new coliseum, and parking garages on a grand scale. He also revitalized the downtown area, provided miles of access roads, and embarked on an ambitious and innovative program of urban renewal aimed at reversing New Haven's physical decline.

Toward the end of his tenure, the Republicans practically gave up trying to find anyone to run against Lee. He was the hero of *Who Governs?*, an influential book by Yale political scientist Robert Dahl, who argued that America is ruled not by C. Wright Mills' sinister power elite, but rather by a plurality of conflicting interest groups.

On May 12, Richard C. Lee and others in his administration were hit with what may become a multi-million-dollar class-action suit for engaging in what the plaintiffs' lawyer, John R. Williams, calls "one of the broadest and most pervasive illegal surveillance programs ever discovered in the United States."

The defendants include another former mayor, three police chiefs, sixteen former and present policemen, four FBI agents, and two employees of the Southern New England Telephone Company (SNETCO). The damage suit was filed by fifty-two plaintiffs, ranging from Yale professors, doctors, and journalists to former members of the Black Panther Party. In addition to illegal wiretap surveillance, it charges the defendants with "infiltration, harassment, vandalism, and terrorism" over at least a seven-year period.

One of the defendants is James Ahern, Lee's police chief in the late 1960s, who made a national reputation for himself as an example of a new generation of enlightened police officers. In his book, *Police in Trouble*, Ahern calls for more restrained police behavior, greater respect for Constitutional rights, and better training of better qualified recruits, and criticizes the FBI's surveillance overkill. Now it seems that Ahern, along with his brother Stephen, formerly chief inspector of the city police department, masterminded the political wiretapping operation.

The surveillance operation was apparently set up in 1964 as part of a police investigation of gambling and bookmaking activities. After Ahern became police chief in 1968, it intensified, turning toward antiwar and black militants. Members of New Haven community groups active in the 1960s suggest that their opposition to Lee's redevelopment program—which displaced hundreds of families and destroyed black neighborhoods—may well have made them targets.

"Lee wouldn't have cared much about our antiwar position," says plaintiff David Dickson, a former activist. "But I think the opposition to redevelopment hit much closer to home, because that was his pet project."

At the operation's peak, during the murder trial of Black Panthers Bobby Seale and Erica Huggins in 1970 and 1971 (both were acquitted), four simultaneous taps were reportedly going around the clock. The FBI supplied some of the equipment and had routine access to the city's wiretap room, according to police sources. Lee, who took a great interest in the police department while he was mayor—a policeman couldn't get a patrol-car assignment without first talking to him—was familiar

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with the entire set-up from the beginning, according to these same sources, and even visited the wiretap room on at least one occasion.

In places like San Diego in the 1960s, the FBI subcontracted with right-wing terrorist groups—there, the Secret Army Organization—to do its dirty tricks; in New Haven, the city police did that work themselves and regularly passed on the information to the FBI. According to former resident Ann Froines, the police slashed the tires of her car and poured sugar in the gas tank, threatened the life of her daughter, and made obscene phone calls. According to news reports, police sources have admitted to these and other similar actions against wiretap targets.

The story of the tapping operation broke last January in a series of *New Haven Journal-Courier* articles written by Andrew Houlding. Frank McManus, chief of police from 1955 to 1968, told Houlding that taps began as long ago as 1943 and continued off and on throughout the 1950s, but he has subsequently denied these statements. A former Yale engineering student, Richard Sulman, has admitted that he helped Stephen Ahern operate a wiretap machine out of Ahern's apartment in 1958.

New Haven community activists from the 1960s were not particularly surprised to hear that their conversations had been tapped. What is more surprising is that taps may have included local politicians as well. Joseph Einhorn, who ran against Lee in 1965, claims that Lee had both his home phone and his campaign headquarters bugged. "There was no doubt in our minds that Lee had too much advance knowledge of even our most detailed plans not to have a tap on us," said Einhorn. "This practice of tapping was no secret. A common joke at the time was that Lee was tapping his subordinates at City Hall. It was one of the necessary evils you had to tolerate if you worked there." No evidence so far supports Einhorn's claims, but there is plenty of speculation.

One source close to the case has said that Lee probably placed a tap on Democratic boss Arthur Barbieri, but Barbieri has denied this. Attorney John Williams told the *New York Times* that there is evidence that James Ahern had a tap on the phone of Mayor Lee himself. Several observers of the New Haven police department, noting that James and Stephen Ahern have accumulated property valued at over $1 million on policemen's salaries, have suggested that Stephen Ahern may have used wiretaps to blackmail businessmen or higher-ups in organized crime, but so far no evidence has turned up to support these allegations.

Clark Broadbent

While mayor Richard C. Lee rebuilt New Haven in the 60s, his police department was tapping phones.

The Justice Department and the State's Attorney have declined to open investigations of FBI and state police involvement. As for SNETCO, the Federal Communications Commission and the Connecticut Public Utility Control Authority believe it can police itself. SNETCO agrees. It has investigated itself and concluded that there was no wrongdoing.

The New Haven Board of Police Commissioners, the only agency now conducting an investigation, has heard testimony from police that hundreds of people's con-

Former Black Panther Lonnie McLucas, now a cabbie in New London, is one of the 52 plaintiffs in the wiretap suit. Evidence that the police illegally tapped McLucas would provide grounds for overturning his conviction for the 1969 slaying of Panther Alex Rackley, who was believed to be an informer.

UPI

Chicago plagued by bugs

Meanwhile, in Chicago, there were successive revelations of Mayor Daley's use of the local red squad to compile dossiers on and otherwise harass his political enemies.

On Wednesday, May 11, 15 current and former members of the Illinois Senate and House of Representatives made public files that had been maintained on them by Chicago police.

On Saturday of the same week, the Citizens' Search Committee, formed in 1973 to seek out candidates for the 1974 Cook County Democratic primary, revealed that it had been infiltrated by one Marcus Salone, an undercover agent.

On the following Tuesday, it was revealed that a dossier was kept on former Governor Dan Walker, beginning in 1959 and continuing at least through 1974. There was no love lost between Walker and Daley, especially after the Walker Commission, named after the governor, called the police riot at the 1968 Chicago Democratic convention a "police riot." Walker served as governor from 1972 to 1976.

The following day, May 18, the Northwest Independent Organization, whose purpose was to build a precinct organization for the election of independent candidates, made public its files, which revealed that it had been infiltrated from its first meeting in 1971.

Also on Wednesday, the Independent Voters of Illinois said its files showed that it had been spied on for almost 30 years.

On Thursday, legislation cleared the Illinois House of Representatives establishing a warrant requirement for surveillance or infiltration of groups engaged in lawful activities. —*C.B.*

versations were tapped during this period. But, say the directors of the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union, the Police Board inquiry "is virtually predestined to result in less than full exposure" or appropriate disciplinary action. So far, none of the policemen who have confessed to their involvement in the tapping operation has received so much as a reprimand.

This is an election year in New Haven, and the revelations have furnished politicians with a peculiar kind of ammunition. The current police chief, Biagio DiLieto, admitted to authorizing one tap in 1971—at Stephen Ahern's insistence—to monitor actions around the Seale-Huggins trial. Since city police are prohibited by law from tapping without a court order, DiLieto has in effect publicly confessed to a felony. Yet while current Democratic Mayor Frank Logue is under pressure from the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union to get rid of DiLieto, other Democratic mayoral contenders, Republican politicians, and the powerful Italian bloc are backing the chief. They contend that the Board's investigation is politically motivated and that DiLieto should not be made a scapegoat. Says Democratic candidate Leon Medvedow, "The Board of Commissioners is stacked against DiLieto. No good will come out of continuing the wiretapping probe."

In the uproar over DiLieto, there seems surprisingly little public outcry against the systematic invasion of privacy to which he was a party. Unless the speculation that Lee and the Aherns tapped local politicians turns out to be correct, it is unlikely that the affair will have long-lasting repercussions. Said one veteran observer of New Haven politics, "No one cares much about bookies and Black Panthers." □

CIA surveillance penalized

In the first trial growing out of the CIA's 20-year illegal letter-opening operation against American citizens, an advisory jury recommended cash awards ranging from $2,500 to $10,000 to three plaintiffs.

Judge Jack B. Weinstein said he would make a final decision on the reimbursements by summer. Attorney Melvin Wulf of the ACLU pointed out that if Weinstein decides the proper compensation is $5,000, it could create a precedent that would leave the CIA liable for $1 billion, since the Agency opened over 200,000 letters.

One of the jurors who recommended a $10,000 award commented, "The American people realize today that they don't have to stand for the government breaking the law." —*C.B.*

STUDENTS

Apartheid sparks student activism

Rob Ericson/The Stanford Daily

Sheriffs deputies escort one of 270 students arrested on May 9 in an anti-apartheid demostration out of the Old Student Union at Stanford.

by Deborah Johnson

Palo Alto, Ca. A militant student movement has quietly reemerged this spring around the issue of university investments in South Africa. The most dramatic of a series of demonstrations was a sit-in at Stanford University where 294 people were arrested. Students there were protesting the institution's refusal to vote its 93,350 shares of Ford Motor Company stock with a shareholders' resolution requiring that the company withdraw its business from South Africa.

Student activism is not new to this campus. During the Vietnam War, student protests forced Stanford to drop classified research, chemical- and biological-warfare research, and ROTC. And in the

After several recent demonstrations which unsuccessfully urged the trustees to vote their Ford stock with the anti-apartheid resolution, 700 people rallied on May 9 and sat in at the old student union building. When nearly 300 people refused to leave at the 5 p.m. closing time, Stanford officials called in local police—who gently removed the protesters to jail, four at a time, until the building was cleared at 4 a.m.

The entire demonstration was a model of decorum. The students were strongly committed to a nonviolent protest. One group distributed a leaflet whose "Guidelines for Behavior" included such admonitions as: "Keep the tone of your voice nonantagonistic and don't use sarcasm. . . . Be ready to react to and to use the key-words 'Quiet' and 'Sit Down.' "

"We feel violence in the U.S. now is not only not useful, but it's counterproductive," said Chris Gray of the Stanford Committee for Responsible Investment Policy (SCRIP). Gray, who works at a campus daycare center, was one of 20 non-students arrested in the protest. Like many of the people in SCRIP's predominantly white male leadership, he was involved in the later years of the antiwar movement.

If student rhetoric has changed since the late sixties, administration rhetoric remains remarkably the same. The Stanford board of trustees voted to abstain on the Ford proxy resolution. Peter Bing, the board's president, wrote letters to the heads of seven major corporations urging them to use "all reasonable means to combat racial discrimination" in South Africa.

The shareholders' resolution that the demonstrators were supporting had been proposed by the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility of the National Council of Churches. The Interfaith Center introduced resolutions this year at Ford, Goodyear, General Electric, Standard Oil of California, and Texaco calling for the companies to terminate their operations in South Africa. All the resolutions lost, with the one at Ford Motor